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ABSTRACT

The mandates of the National Library of Education include a directive to become a principal center for information and services related to education. As part of this directive, a national network of education information, the United States Education Information Network (USEIN) has been proposed. This paper provides recommendations for developing and implementing a model for an effective education information network. Five key recommendations are presented from which other areas of activity and development can flow: the appointment of a provisional working group to develop bylaws and operating procedures for USEIN; the creation of a listserv to connect USEIN members; the development of a World Wide Web page devoted to USEIN with links to relevant resources and sites; the development of a master directory of education information and service providers; and the identification and solicitation of partners to participate in USEIN. Policies that will enable any of the network's users to utilize the network and its resources, regardless of technological skills or access to sophisticated computers, must be implemented and followed. Alternative mechanisms must be provided so that equal access is available to all. The philosophical commitment to provision of education information to all users, in all formats, through a variety of mechanisms, must be a transcending part of the process. (Contains 11 references.) (Author/SWC)

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ED 414 903

DEVELOPING A PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION MODEL FOR BRINGING USEIN INTO OPERATION

Paper Prepared for the
United States National Library of Education

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ABSTRACT

In 1994, by federal law, the National Library of Education (NLE) was established within the U.S. Department of Education. Among the mandates given to this new Library were directives to become a principal center for information and services related to education. Specifically, the Library was directed to establish a central information and referral service to respond to telephone, electronic, mail, and other inquiries from the public as well as members of the federal government. As part of this directive, a national network of education information, the U.S. Education Information Network (USEIN), has been proposed. Following are recommendations for developing and implementing a model for bringing this network into operation.

Drawing from the other four papers (Carr, D'Amicantonio, Ely and Libutti, 1997) that address issues of organizational models and best practices; roles, responsibilities and incentives for potential partners; technological challenges and opportunities; and, access and equity issues in provision of information services, this paper recommends the beginning steps needed to develop an effective information network. Rather than repeating information from the other papers, an attempt has been made to proceed directly from those discussions to propose the structure needed to develop the network.

Five key recommendations are presented from which other areas of activity and development can flow. These include:

- the appointment of a provisional working group to develop bylaws and operating procedures for USEIN,
- the creation of a listserv to connect USEIN members,
- the development of a Web page devoted to USEIN with links to relevant resources and sites,
- the development of a master directory of education information and service providers, and
- the identification and solicitation of partners to participate in USEIN.

The rationale for each of these five recommendations is included in the body of this paper, as are additional recommendations to these five key steps.

Of paramount importance in developing this network is the continual focus on the ultimate user of its resources. This user may be a federal employee, parent, educator, researcher, student, or member of the general public. Policies that will enable any one of these to use the network and its resources, regardless of technological skills or access to sophisticated computers, must be implemented and followed. The diversity of American society includes those who are unable to afford expensive computer equipment, or who are unable to understand the layers of information presented in a Web page. Alternative mechanisms must be provided so that equal access is available to all. Each of the papers addresses this issue as an unequivocal foundation to the development of the network.

While organizational and structural issues related to the development of USEIN are the primary focus of this particular paper, the philosophical commitment to provision of education information to all users, in all formats, through a variety of mechanisms, must be a transcending part of the process.

Developing a Planning and Implementation Model for Bringing USEIN into Operation

With a goal of establishing and operating a comprehensive national information partnership in education to serve America's educators, parents, policy makers, and the public, the National Library of Education in conjunction with its parent organization, the Office of Educational Research and Improvement of the U.S. Department of Education has a major task to accomplish in a relatively brief time. This task is complicated by the rapid change of technology that is occurring within society at large. There are many benefits to those rapid changes in technology, but using them to best advantage for the largest group of constituents requires careful planning and evaluation.

The focus of this paper is to synthesize the findings of the other four papers (Carr, D'Amicantonio, Ely and Libutti, 1997) related to the United States Education Information Network (USEIN), and to present practical guidance on implementation of the network. To that end, a brief review of the purpose of the network is appropriate. USEIN is intended to be a national network of education information providers that includes libraries, archives, educational institutions and schools, and other information providers such as corporations, associations, organizations, and agencies. It is intended to be a network of active partners collaborating to provide education information in all formats, to all customers, in all education-related subjects. Given this mandate, it is clear that a new vision of information provision is needed. At the same time, existing resources need to be used to the best and fullest advantage. Proposed in the following sections are mechanisms for achieving those goals.

ESSENTIAL STEPS/REQUIREMENTS

Steering Committee

One of the primary steps necessary to creating USEIN is to establish its bylaws and operating procedures. Using those of the U.S. Agricultural Information Network (USAIN) as a model, a similar set of bylaws and operating procedures should be developed. To accomplish that, the first step is to create a provisional working organization to establish a structure and bylaws. This working group or steering committee should reflect the constituencies that will use the network or serve as partners or coalition members. Issues deserving particular attention are budgetary sources, including dues; executive committee composition; and delegation of duties to the National Library of Education (NLE) staff, other U.S. Department of Education personnel, or to USEIN's committee structure. Before setting up the USEIN structure, it is necessary to know the types of funding available to support the network. If funding is to be provided by government allocations then certain expectations can be met. If funding relies on membership dues and grant awards, then the budget will be erratic and unpredictable. Further, if funding relies extensively on grants, individuals will have to spend a great deal of time preparing and submitting requests for grants. The question arises then as to which structure should be given this responsibility: NLE or USEIN. As an outreach organization within NLE, the USEIN must rely on permanent NLE staff for support and continuity. It is imperative that the structure of USEIN and its interactions with NLE be decided as early as

possible, so that progressive steps can be taken to implement the network itself. A solid organizational structure will encourage the growth and development of the network, by providing a firm foundation and process behind the scenes.

Whichever group develops the bylaws and operating procedures should carefully consider the issue of having a Secretary/Treasurer as a member of the Executive Committee and a separate Recorder appointed from among the other directors. While this is the model used by USAIN, it would be more logical to have a separate Secretary and Treasurer with clearly defined responsibilities. Another issue to consider is the disconcerting similarity between the acronyms, USAIN and USEIN. A discussion among participants at the November 1997 USEIN Kick-Off Conference resulted in a recommendation for a name change that emphasizes the connection to education, preferably by using "ED" prominently within the new name. Suggestions included EDNet, EDUNet, EDInfo, EDQuest and others. For the sake of convenience, the term USEIN will be used throughout this paper, with a strong recommendation to alter it as quickly as possible.

Development of Listserv

Another immediate need is to establish a listserv for USEIN, to be called USEIN-L. This electronic vehicle will allow information to be quickly distributed to the members and interested constituents. Further, it will allow interested users to query the list for information and assistance. Once again, the structure needs to be determined prior to creating this list.

Shall it be open only to members? Shall it be open to any interested individual? Will it be moderated? If so, who has the responsibility to moderate the list? Will individuals be "unsubscribed" if they fail to meet member status each year, or if they ignore basic electronic courtesies and etiquette? While these issues may seem minor in the overall effort to establish a national network, having clear guidelines that can be articulated to the public will resolve a great many concerns before they become controversial issues. In her paper, Patricia Libutti addresses issues related to best practices and potential models that would be useful in dealing with these and other issues.

Web Site

In order to promote the existence of USEIN, a strong presence on the Web is needed. Creation of a USEIN Web page is necessary in order to begin public awareness efforts. This page will include links to other resources, access to a searchable directory of education information and service providers (described below), and will be integrated with ERIC resources. Due to the high level of visibility of this site, it should be constructed with care and not promoted prematurely.

Education Master Directory

To create a new network of education information providers it is essential to first inventory the current sources of educational information. To a large extent, this has already been done through the ERIC directories of ERIC information service providers and educational organizations. Other directories, such as the Anderson's Directory of Curriculum Materials Centers (1996) provide listings of further resources of educational information. Standard directories, such as the American Library Directory (1997-98) provide additional sources of information. However, this kind of information remains scattered and needs to be synthesized in one useful directory of education information and service providers. An effort has been made to begin this process, but further consolidation of activities coupled with clear guidelines for inclusion and format of entries need to developed. It is particularly important that duplication of current activities within ERIC and OERI not occur. NLE staff need to inventory existing projects and merge them with these recommendations for the most effective use of resources.

To that end, one of the first tasks will be to retrieve these many sources of information and compile them into one directory - both in print and electronic format. Once compiled, this information should be searchable by keyword so that an information seeker might retrieve information about historical textbook collections that include materials from the 1800s or could easily locate lesson plans on Latin American culture through the Internet. It will be necessary to invest a fair amount of funding and time to create this kind of resource. Until such a directory is compiled, however, it will be

difficult to establish the kind of network envisioned in Access for All (1997). This master directory should be viewed as a product in constant development that will be enhanced as other sources of information are identified and included.

Identification and Solicitation of Partners

In addition to creating the master directory, the U.S. Department of Education should solicit participation through its many current outreach activities. Some examples would be requesting participation through Department and ERIC publications, including an article on the Department's Web page that encourages self-identification and participation, and continuing its presence at professional education conferences and workshops where direct interaction with representatives from educational organizations could occur.

Each organization identified should be informed of the value of being a participant in USEIN, as outlined in Jo Ann Carr's paper. These benefits include increased exposure, reaching a broader audience through extended outreach mechanisms, and participating in cutting edge research and activities within the field of education. As USEIN participants, clear expectations need to be provided to each organization, institution and agency.

To establish the USEIN, a combination of partnerships and affiliations utilizing technology and traditional forms of communication must be established. These partnerships will encourage outreach to interested constituents through publications, workshops, consultations, and information

provision via telephone, the Internet, and site visits. Each partner must commit to maintaining current information on file with the U.S. Department of Education regarding resources and accessibility.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES OF LOWER PRIORITY

Collaborative Efforts in Collection Responsibilities

Using models such as the one demonstrated by the Illinois Cooperative Collection Management Program (CCMP), agreements to collect education materials in selected areas need to be arranged. As part of the Illinois CCMP, libraries within institutions of higher education in the state agreed to collect extensively in subdisciplines of a particular field, such as education (O'Brien, 1995). Each participating institution agreed to purchase materials in subdisciplines that were relevant to their local constituents, but also agreed to make these materials available for loan through the statewide network. Each participating library agreed to collect in one or more areas, such as elementary education, science education, or higher education. These agreements were ratified by signed documents with the directors of each participating institution. The intended effect of this arrangement is that other libraries can rely on the designated institution to collect comprehensively in a particular subdiscipline, thus relieving the need to purchase esoteric or little used materials. This then allows the other libraries to spend funds on their own designated areas of comprehensive collecting responsibility. It is understood that borrowing and lending arrangements will be made for all members of the participating institutions,

and that if necessary an institution may choose to end the agreement with a one year notice of intent. This model of cooperative collection building is still undergoing refinement, but it is the precursor to an extended program of agreements involving primarily academic institutions, but possibly public, special, and school libraries as well. USEIN should focus on encouraging this kind of resource sharing as part of its commitment to education information provision. The first step would be to identify institutions where particular strengths in education-related collections exist. This information should be posted as part of a searchable database on the USEIN Web site. The next step is to affirm that institutions with these strengths agree to be resource and information providers as part of USEIN. Any gaps in education subdisciplines will need to be identified, and institutions will need to be solicited to serve as USEIN partners for these specific areas. Parameters will need to be established in order to explain the extent of services and resource sharing offered by each participant. Libraries and archives have long-standing traditions and practices related to resource sharing and partnership agreements, although not always in relation to collaborative collection development. Other partners such as agencies and corporations will have to develop a resource sharing philosophy to fully benefit from and be a benefit to the other members of the network.

Identification and Description of Historical Collections

As part of the background information developed for the collaborative collection responsibilities, information about those institutions having historical collections should be gathered as well. Some information about historical textbook collections has been gathered (Directory of Historical Curriculum Collections, 1988), but information about other collections having

particular strengths has not been compiled in one location. This information should be collected and compiled into the keyword searchable master directory mentioned previously. Using various software programs, smaller directories could be created with a focus on particular services or collection strengths. If descriptive information is to be included, it needs to be standardized in the way it is collected. The Directory of Curriculum Materials Centers (1996) offers one model of standard information regarding size, content, and services. For historical collections a more narrative approach in addition to the basic quantitative information is needed. Information about historical education collections is frequently requested from large research libraries, so having a source that readily provides this information would be useful. Requests received for historical curriculum materials are as frequently received from individuals seeking a textbook having nostalgic associations from childhood as from researchers evaluating the impact of pedagogical stances in popular textbooks from the early 20th century. A directory of institutions and agencies that can provide access to historical materials would be of benefit to all.

Creation of Curriculum Centers or Alternatives

One of the issues that raises itself with regularity in education libraries is the need for regional curriculum centers. Some states have textbook adoption policies for the entire state with a central repository that maintains a historical as well as a current collection. Most states do not have state mandated textbook adoption however, and a wide range of publications are needed in curriculum centers to represent the variety of materials available to teachers and teachers-in-training when working in the classroom. Most institutions of higher education maintain a curriculum collection. These

collections generally focus on current materials, discarding older items when a new edition is received. These centers are often underfunded so that only selected materials are included. Often these centers manage to serve the needs of the institutional clientele on a limited basis, but are unable to provide services to the local community of teachers, parents, and home schoolers. The disparity between collections is quite significant, and reflects the level of support offered by parent institutions as well as institutional mandates for service to constituents and non-constituents. For example, the library at Illinois State University maintains a strong collection of current materials, including multimedia, in its curriculum collection. Less than 100 miles east of that collection, the library at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign maintains a collection of extensive historical curriculum materials dating back to the early 1800s, while its current collection of curriculum materials is selective with limited inclusion of multimedia items. Unless a potential user is aware of these distinctions, an uninformed decision may lead the user to a collection that does not meet her needs. Two ways of dealing with this matter are apparent. The first is to establish regional curriculum materials centers where comprehensive collections are maintained for the use of all interested persons. Establishment of such centers is a worthy goal, but due to costs, unlikely to be practical. The second approach would be to take advantage of new technologies and an increased reliance on resource sharing to compile information about curriculum centers and their strengths and accessibility, into a directory and/or searchable database. Using the latter approach, a user would not only be able to identify appropriate collections, but with links to the local online catalog, be able to search the collection remotely to verify if the needed materials are available or, using e-mail, query the curator of the collection to verify its relevance to a particular information

need. Once again, the master directory outlined in earlier sections of this report would provide the mechanism to provide information without necessitating the development of new facilities or centers.

FEATURES AND COMPONENTS OF USEIN

USEIN will consist of a network of participants and affiliates that have been identified as providers of education information and services. Included will be:

Libraries

Archives

Educational institutions and schools

Specialized education libraries

Specialized curriculum collections

Educational organizations

Professional education associations

Corporations

Agencies

Each of these participants is expected to contribute an annual update to directory information. Further, each participant will describe the resources it offers and the audience for which it is intended: educators, researchers, scholars, students, parents, or the general public. Limitations on services must be included as well.

The directory will be maintained as a keyword searchable database accessible through the Web as well as in print format for those users unable to access the Web. Only a limited number of print directories will be produced and provided as on-demand publications. A modest charge may be made to recover costs of printing this directory, in keeping with fees for other government publications.

USEIN also will provide consultants and information specialists to assist individuals or groups seeking information about education issues and concerns. The National Library of Education generally will not directly provide these consultants, but will act as a clearinghouse of information to match those seeking information with the appropriate individual or source of that information. The keyword searchable electronic directory described above will be a necessary feature for making these matches between information seeker and information provider.

USEIN will offer workshops on various topics related to education information. While it is understood that education organizations and agencies will continue to be the primary sources of information, USEIN participants will act as the agent to describe the resources available and how to identify and use them. Workshops will focus on both electronic access to information as well as traditional access for those users with limited technological resources.

USEIN will host a listserv that will allow members to discuss issues of concern within the realm of education. Decisions about criteria for subscribing to the network will need to be made. At least one individual from

each participating organization is expected to be a subscriber to USEIN-L, the authorized listserv, with the understanding that relevant information will be shared as appropriate with others in the organization.

USEIN will include a strong Web presence.

Whenever feasible, existing structures, such as ERIC services and resources, will be used or re-engineered to avoid duplication of effort.

USEIN SERVICES

USEIN services will include referrals via telephone, mail, electronic mail, and personal contact. Workshops on how to best use USEIN resources will be offered on a geographic basis, generally in conjunction with another event such as a conference of education or library professionals. NLE may contract with selected information providers to offer such workshops as well.

USEIN will maintain a Web page with regularly updated features and links.

A directory with keyword searching capability will be compiled and updated regularly. Each entry will include basic information such as title of organization, address, telephone and FAX numbers, e-mail address and URL if available, name of contact person, scope of services offered, targeted audience, restrictions to services if applicable, and a brief section of additional information supplied by the participating organization. This directory will be available and searchable on the Web. Additionally, print

copies will be made available in limited quantities and for a modest charge for those who are unable to access the Web.

USEIN-L, the authorized listserv will be hosted by the NLE and will serve as the primary vehicle for communication among the members of USEIN. While this is not viewed as a closed list, it is expected that participating organizations/partners will be more likely to benefit from the information disseminated via the listserv than will the general user. Information of more general interest will be posted and made available on the USEIN Web site.

USEIN will host annual meetings to discuss issues of concern to partners and users of educational information. These meetings will generally be held in conjunction with a meeting of another organization, such as the American Library Association, the Special Libraries Association, or the American Association of School Librarians, in order to draw from the larger groups of participants. Meetings may also be held at conferences of other educational organizations such as the Council for Exceptional Children, International Reading Association, Association for Library and Information Science Education, or American Educational Research Association. Workshops that address USEIN concerns will also be encouraged at these conferences.

USEIN services will be directed to all constituents. Those populations frequently ignored within society, such as the homeless noted in John D'Amicantonio's paper, will be able to obtain access through local libraries, toll-free answering services, and products that do not require access to expensive technologies.

PRIORITIES FOR IMPLEMENTING USEIN

Implementation of USEIN should begin as quickly as possible. To that end, the following steps need to be taken.

A working group drawn from stakeholders needs to be established to begin drafting bylaws and operating procedures. This group should consider the USAIN documents, but feel free to diverge from them in order to better fit the needs of the educational community. This working group should be supported and staffed by the NLE, with extensive consultation about the role that NLE can play in budgetary and future staff support of the network. A clear charge to the working group and any subcommittees it may form needs to be provided. The working group needs to make its work as public as possible through postings on the listserv, U.S. Department of Education Web site, or other mechanisms that will generate feedback from interested parties. Since many components of USEIN are already in existence or ready for development or evolution from related resources, it will be the working group's task to prioritize production schedules in consultation with NLE staff.

A listserv to connect the membership of USEIN should be established as quickly as possible. The NLE should host the listserv, with operating guidelines, including archiving policies, established by the same group described above or by another temporary task group. This listserv will be critical to members working on various projects at the organizational stages as well as at later stages.

A Web site devoted to USEIN must be developed. This Web site will include links to other relevant sites, and maintain a keyword searchable database of education information and service providers and other products recommended for development. This site should be developed with care rather than haste since it will be the primary source of information for many constituents.

Development of a master directory of education organizations, institutions, and partners will begin using electronic resources already under construction by ERIC and NLE staff, with information drawn from sources such as the Directory of ERIC Resource Collections (1996) and the Directory of Curriculum Materials Centers (1996), with additional information solicited through U.S. Department of Education, OERI, ERIC, and NLE publications. Once this master directory is compiled it will serve as the major resource for education information providers of all types of information in any type of format. In his paper, Don Ely referred to this as a "national union catalog," with very similar purpose. In the interim, NLE will continue to provide referral services using the publications mentioned previously, and other relevant resources. It remains essential that products already under development be merged or utilized as part of USEIN whenever practical and appropriate in order to be efficient.

Mailings to educational organizations, such as those listed in the Encyclopedia of Associations (1997) should be sent to solicit participation as a USEIN partner. Educational organizations such as the PTA should be included in those mailings. Corporations with an educational focus, including software, equipment and textbook producers, should also be contacted for

potential partnership. Partner groups should be recognized for their specialized expertise, time and contributions.

Promotional and informational news releases will be prepared and a schedule established to disseminate information about USEIN. News releases will include human interest stories of how the information network can assist a parent trying to improve a child's homework habits, or how a school district was able to levy a tax increase based on information from the network, or how it was possible to track down a textbook used in a 1930s classroom for the benefit of a local citizen. Marketing should be professional, attention-getting, and of high quality.

A schedule of workshops will be established to disseminate information about USEIN.

The first annual meeting will be scheduled for 1998, based on the guidelines established in the operating procedures.

CONTINGENCIES

Due to the massive effort required to create the master directory of information providers, NLE will continue to provide information as it does currently through telephone and e-mail interactions. ERIC will also continue to provide this kind of information using its current resources. The master directory will go well beyond current services however due to its inclusion of education information providers that are not restricted to a particular

function (such as maintaining a collection of ERIC documents or providing ERIC services).

Because not all potential users have access to electronic mail and the Web, alternative forms of access to USEIN will include telephone services as well as print directories.

Should the establishment of USEIN-L be delayed, a strong presence on the Web advising as to the current status of the implementation of USEIN needs to be provided. While this will not be as satisfactory as a listserv offering direct communication, it will be an acceptable temporary substitute. An important component of the Web page will be the inclusion of an e-mail address and toll-free telephone number to which queries may be directed.

Establishment of a working group to develop guidelines and procedures needs to receive top priority. Recommendations for the composition of this group should be solicited from the most likely organizational partners described in this and the other papers. To be effective, the working group should consist of no fewer than eight, and no more than 16 members, drawn from diverse geographical and subject-based areas. As a supplement to this working group, small task groups to develop guidelines for each of the proposed projects could be formed, leaving the working group to serve as a steering committee.

RESPONSIBILITIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

The NLE will be responsible for the establishment of a working group to develop bylaws and operating procedures. NLE will consult with relevant organizations, identifying potential members, as well as potential members of other future task groups, and appoint the initial working group.

The NLE will establish a listserv, to be called USEIN-L, and will provide computer space, staff for development, staff as a moderator, and general support.

The NLE will develop a USEIN Web page that will serve as a gateway to information about the network, related sites, and other services.

The NLE and/or ERIC will begin compilation of a master directory of organizations and partners. Much of this information is available from current projects and other sources. However, the work of NLE will be to consolidate this information into one master directory, to be posted on the Web, with keyword searchable functions, and also to publish a small number of print copies for distribution to those unable to access the Web.

The NLE will continue to operate as a referral service and clearinghouse for education information. While NLE will not be expected to answer all questions asked, it will have the responsibility of maintaining a toll-free number and Internet presence allowing questions to be directed electronically or telephonically. Using resources at its disposal, including ERIC services, NLE will answer questions or refer to the appropriate partner organization or institution.

NLE will develop a list of potential partners, and solicit participation in the network.

NLE will work with the USEIN Executive Committee once it is established to organize and schedule workshops and meetings. Once the Executive Committee is appointed, it will have responsibility for setting the priorities for the network and its development and implementation.

TIME LINES

November 1997	USEIN Kick-Off Conference, Washington, D.C.
December 1997	Revisions to papers discussed at the Kick-Off Conference
January/February 1998	Appointment of Working Group to develop operating procedures and bylaws
	Planning and development of USEIN-L listserv by NLE and/or ERIC staff
	Planning and development of USEIN master directory of educational organizations and partners
January-July 1998	Development of USEIN Web page by NLE
April 1998	Submission of operating procedures and bylaws to NLE
April-July 1998	Solicitation of partners through mailings and articles in Department publications and professional journals
May 1998	Appointment of USEIN Executive Committee
June/July 1998	First meeting of USEIN Executive Committee
Summer/Fall 1998	Listserv, Web page, and electronic directory become operational
Fall 1998 forward	Ongoing development of partnerships and refining of services and products
Summer 1999	Implement first formal evaluation of USEIN

USEIN TOOLS FOR DEVELOPMENT

The primary tools for USEIN development, as articulated above, are a listserv for members, a Web site for posting of general information with links to relevant sites, an electronic question-answering service (possibly utilizing the existing ERIC services), a directory of education information providers with keyword searching capability, and subsets of that directory that will list institutions with collaborative collection responsibilities or that will provide information about historical curriculum or education collections. Other products and tools will be identified for development by future partners and USEIN members.

It should be noted that one of the primary tools that will aid in USEIN development is the creation of operating procedures and bylaws. Although these documents will be of limited interest to the public, they will provide the framework needed to establish the ongoing philosophy and services provided by USEIN.

A critical tool necessary to USEIN operation is a formal evaluation. Criteria for these evaluations should be established at the same time as are operating procedures. Evaluation instruments used in other federal agencies may serve as models.

SERVICES AND ASSOCIATED POLICIES/RULES

Each service provided by USEIN will need to have clearly stated policies and procedures. With the numerous partners anticipated for this active network, it is critical to have clear expectations for both partners and the users of the information to be provided. Quality assurance will validate USEIN's role

in education information provision. While it is expected that major educational organizations will wish to be part of the network and will be able to contribute to the dissemination of educational information, it also can be expected that fringe organizations having a particular philosophical stance would like to participate in USEIN. Guidelines for participation need to be established so that expectations and obligations as a partner are clearly defined. Once again the establishment of the operating procedures and the bylaws must take precedence over some of the technological activities needed to establish USEIN.

POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVE PLANS

Developing and implementing a national education information network will require examination of many issues. Model organizational structures and best practices for collaborative partnerships have been explored by Patricia Libutti; roles, responsibilities and incentives for potential partners were addressed in Jo Ann Carr's paper; technological challenges and opportunities have been examined by Don Ely; and, access and equity issues in providing effective educational information services were discussed by John D'Amicantonio. Each paper recommends how to best address specific issues within the proposed education information network. However, these papers all acknowledge the limitations of technology in meeting the needs of all constituents. Alternative plans that will address those concerns include maintaining in-person contacts, telephone and mail accessibility, and resources that will serve the needs of special populations. Outsourcing some of the proposed projects, such as development of a listserv, Web site, or

master directory of education information providers, is another potential option. Any alternative proposals must retain the stated priority of serving the needs of the greatest number with the most accessible resources, however. Alternative proposals which focus only on small categories of users, without an overarching mechanism for linking to a broader array of resources and services will not be acceptable. Once again, the primary thrust of implementing USEIN must be to establish operating procedures and bylaws from which all other developments can flow. Of major importance once the network has been established is to implement regular evaluation of its functionality. Reviews similar to those undertaken for other Department programs will be required every 2-5 years.

CONCLUSION

In order to create and implement a national education information network as outlined in Access for All, several key steps must be taken. The kick-off conference was an excellent way in which to gather a knowledgeable group of experts to consider the issues as outlined in these papers. These experts brought forth new ideas and recommendations. A working group to create a set of operating procedures and bylaws for USEIN must be appointed immediately following the submission of the revised papers so that a philosophical and structural framework can be created in which USEIN can flourish. This group should be drawn from a wide array of education and library professionals in order to establish the procedural guidelines and to reflect the diverse concerns of the network's constituents. This working group must be given a firm deadline for submission of its work, and its work must be supported by and undertaken in close cooperation with NLE staff.

Another crucial step in the development of the network is to create a listserv (USEIN-L) which will allow for speedy electronic communication among the working group and interested colleagues initially, and USEIN members once the network is fully implemented.

Central to the development of USEIN is the creation of a Web page that will present the purpose of the network, support its mission with links to relevant sites and access to electronic directories and products, and provide an electronic answering service.

As part of the development of USEIN products, an electronic directory of education information and service providers, broader in scope than any existing directories, will need to be generated. This is a major effort that will require large quantities of time and funding, but will serve as the core resource for network referrals and information services. Included in this master directory will be narrative descriptions of specialized education collections, as well as quantitative data about these resources. This master directory will be searchable by keyword, and may also be used to create smaller databases of information about curriculum materials centers, historical collections, and Web based resources. This directory will be accessible through the USEIN Web page, and will be available in print form in small quantities for those unable to access the Web. Regular updating of the directory will be one of USEIN's responsibilities.

Finally, the key to the success of USEIN is its partners. These partners must be drawn from every sector having an interest in education, and must represent the diversity of the recipients of the network's services and resources. Educators, parents, students, the general public, and researchers must be served by the network as well as represented in its many organizational

affiliates. This will require extensive outreach to organizations to promote the value of the network and its services. Partnership within USEIN must be viewed as a valuable activity to potential partners to encourage their ongoing participation. USEIN will only be viewed as valuable to its intended audience if its sources and services have depth, are comprehensive, and reflect the diversity of concerns within education. To that end, vigilance in maintaining a high quality program of interrelated services and products is essential. The enthusiasm and dedication demonstrated by the participants to date who have worked on the establishment of the network are proof that USEIN is a viable and greatly needed mechanism to promote the goals of educating current and future populations of the United States.

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